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Subdeacon Nektarios, M.A. · 6 hours ago · 9 min read

## Official Declaration of the Russian Association of Shanghai Concerning Saint John of Shanghai and the Soviet-Moscow Patriarchate

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Former Permanent Chairman of the Russian Association of Shanghai — G. K. Bologov,

Former members of its Executive Committee (last composition): Dr. P. I. Alekseenko and V. V. Krasovsky,

Former members of the Audit and Supervisory Commission (last composition): N. N. Pleshanov and B. M. Krannin,

Former Head of the Charitable Department of the Association — B. L. Kuper, and

Former Chairman of the Russian Chamber of Commerce of Shanghai — M. A. Moshkin,

Hereby, under oath on the Cross and the Holy Gospel, by our signatures certify and solemnly declare that—during his many years of spiritual ministry to the Russian émigré colony in Shanghai, throughout his tenure as Bishop, and later as Archbishop of Shanghai, from 1936 until the evacuation of Russian refugees from China—Bishop (and later Archbishop) John (Maximovich) showed himself to be a true and faithful servant of the Holy Church of Christ. During all this time, including the difficult years of the Second World War (1939–1945) and the postwar period up to 1949, we never observed any behavior or heard any words from him that could be interpreted as sympathy toward, or collaboration with, the Soviet regime or its representatives.





St. John in his office in China, with a portrait of St. Anthony (Khrapovitsky) in the background.

The ministry of the ruling Archbishop took place before the eyes of thousands of Russian anti-communists in Shanghai, who for the rest of their lives will remain grateful to Bishop John for saving the Shanghai Cathedral from seizure by the godless; for defending, besides that main church, all the Orthodox churches of Shanghai and preserving them under the jurisdiction of the Synod Abroad; for retaining the majority of the Orthodox clergy as followers of the ruling Archbishop of China, Victor, who was subordinated to the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in China of the Soviet Church; and for his steadfast and self-sacrificing struggle against communist propaganda, which sought to entice Russian souls with false patriotism and promises of a better life, urging Russian people to take Soviet passports and repatriate—under Stalin’s amnesty—to the Soviet Union.

The mobilization of all Russian anti-communist forces in Shanghai to resist and oppose the rapidly growing Soviet propaganda and mass provocations, and the creation of the Russian Emigrant Association uniting within it about 6,000 White Russian people—would have been impossible without the spiritual leadership, steadfastness, and example of Bishop John.

Those thousands of honest Russian people who left China owe their survival, morale, and strong faith to his modest, wise, and powerful spirit. They later settled across the world—in the United States, France, Brazil, Australia, and even in Soviet Siberia—but all remember with gratitude their spiritual leader, Bishop John.

Many of us had to leave Bishop John just a month after his arrival in Shanghai, when his struggle against the Soviet emissaries had only just begun. Nevertheless, we were witnesses of this struggle and testify before God and people that Bishop John never strayed from the path of true Orthodox service and was a faithful and unbending fighter against Soviet infiltration into the Russian diaspora.

We, who witnessed this epoch of struggle—G. K. Bologov, who was Chairman of the Russian Emigrant Association from its founding, and M. A. Moshkin, Chairman of the Russian Chamber of Commerce and witness of the defense of the Shanghai Cathedral since 1938—along with the assistant warden of the Cathedral since 1943, who was close to Vladika (Bishop John), took direct part in this struggle and know all its details.

Pressure on Bishop John of Shanghai from the Soviet side began even before the end of the Second World War, when hierarchs of the Church Abroad in Manchuria—Metropolitan Meletius, Archbishops Nestor and Dimitry, and Bishop Juvenaly—sent letters to Archbishop Victor, head of the Chinese and Peking Missions, and to Bishop John of Shanghai, declaring that since the war was over, they should now recognize Patriarch Alexy of Moscow and All Russia, and suggested that Archbishop Victor and Bishop John follow their example and submit to the new Moscow Patriarch, as the legitimate head of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Because of the war and the lack of communication between the Synod Abroad and China, and being unaware of the true situation in Europe, America, and other countries, Bishop John wrote, after receiving this letter from the hierarchs in Harbin, to his superior, Archbishop Victor in Peking, advising not to take any action regarding recognition of the Patriarch until the Synod Abroad itself determined and clarified the canonical and ecclesiastical status of the Moscow Patriarchate. Bishop John fully supported Archbishop Victor, who remained loyal to the Synod Abroad, not recognizing the Moscow Patriarchate, which had been restored under the complete control of the Soviet authorities after the arrest and murder of Patriarch Tikhon and Metropolitan Peter (Polyansky), continuing the Bolshevik policy of subjugation of the Church.

In anticipation of the eventual fall of Shanghai and under the pressure of the Soviet consulate, which urged the clergy to commemorate Patriarch Alexy in the liturgy (according to Decree No. 630 of September 6/24, 1945), Bishop John, during the services, replaced the former commemoration of the “Orthodox Episcopate of the Russian Church.”

Meanwhile, communication with the Synod Abroad was finally restored on October 2, 1945, when Bishop John received a telegram from Switzerland signed by Metropolitan Anastassy, briefly stating that the Synod Abroad continued to exist, that Bishop John’s parents were alive and in Germany, and that the Metropolitan requested him to report on the state of the Church in China.

Bishop John sent a detailed report about the situation in Shanghai, requesting instructions, and forwarded the text of Metropolitan Anastassy’s telegram to Archbishop Victor in Peking.

The next telegram arrived in November from Archbishop Tikhon of Western America and San Francisco, informing that Metropolitans Anastassy, Vitaly, Ioasaph, and Jerome had reestablished contact among themselves and asked Bishop John to remain loyal to the Moscow Patriarchate no longer.

This was all that Bishop John needed to know, and when, at the beginning of December 1945, a letter arrived from Archbishop Victor ordering him to commemorate Patriarch Alexy at services, Bishop John categorically refused to do so, since the Patriarchate of Moscow remained under Soviet authority.



When Archbishop Victor flew from Shanghai to Peking for a meeting, it turned out that not only he, but also his archdeacon and secretary, had already accepted Soviet citizenship and received Soviet passports.

Archbishop Victor persistently persuaded, demanded, and ordered Bishop John to submit to the Moscow Patriarchate. Bishop John, however, called a meeting of the clergy and parish councils, at which it was unanimously decided to follow the example of the Church Abroad, remaining faithful to the Synod Abroad. The meeting was chaired by Bishop John himself, who left the session to allow the clergy to deliberate freely. After his speech, in which he urged the clergy to remain faithful to the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, the assembly passed a resolution to report to Metropolitan Anastassy about their loyalty to the Synod Abroad and to request his guidance.

There was no response from the Synod for a long time, and for about seven weeks Bishop John was subjected to terrible pressure from the Soviet authorities, Archbishop Victor, Metropolitan Nestor in Manchuria, and, through them, much of the Russian community that had fallen under Soviet influence. Letters and statements appeared in the press, in clubs, and at meetings, asserting that the election of the Patriarch was lawful and canonical according to Church rules. To prove this, the Soviet side proposed to show a documentary film about the election of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

Bishop John agreed to attend the screening of the film in order to see with his own eyes and verify the procedure of the election—on the condition that the showing would take place not in the Soviet club, where all Soviet films were shown, but in the hall of some neutral theater.

Most of the Shanghai clergy attended the screening, including the current Metropolitan of San Francisco, Protopresbyter Fr. M. Kolievich, and Fr. A. Velin, among others.

Before the film began—and without any warning—the Soviet orchestra played the Soviet anthem. Bishop John immediately stood up and firmly declared that he would not remain in the hall while that hymn was played, as it was blasphemous to honor the hymn of those who persecuted the Church. He left the hall, and most of the clergy followed him, refusing to watch the film. Only a few individuals stayed behind—those who later joined the Soviet side.

This statement by Bishop John further enraged the pro-Bolshevik circles, and the persecution of the Bishop and his faithful clergy intensified even more.

On March 20, the day of the Cathedral Feast, during the Divine Liturgy, a telegram was brought to Bishop John. Without interrupting the service and never allowing any worldly distractions during worship, Bishop John quietly placed the telegram in his pocket, without reading it, and opened it only after the end of the service. The telegram, signed by Metropolitan Anastassy, read:

“I recognize the resolution of the clergy under your chairmanship as correct.”

This moral support, received from the Head of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, gave Bishop John and his faithful clergy renewed strength to continue defending the Orthodox churches against the encroachments and pressures of the Bolsheviks.

In this struggle, Bishop John spared no rest, tirelessly visiting the churches and schools, encouraging the wavering, calling for unity, and guiding the Orthodox faithful, as well as the Russian organizations.

During this same period, Bishop John was subjected to especially strong pressure and threats from both Archbishop Victor, who had joined the Moscow Patriarchate, and from the newly appointed Exarch of the Patriarch of Moscow in the Far East, Metropolitan Nestor.

Finally, on June 3, 1946, a telegram arrived from Metropolitan Anastassy in Munich announcing the elevation of Bishop John to the rank of Archbishop of Shanghai. This recognition by the Synod Abroad was formally confirmed by the official decree of the Synod.

On Friday, May 31, 1946, Archbishop Victor once again arrived in Shanghai. This time, however, upon his arrival, he was greeted not by the clergy and faithful, but by officials of the Soviet Consulate. That very evening, Archbishop Victor went to the Cathedral, accompanied by consular staff and young Soviet Komsomol members, and occupied the cathedral premises with a group of his followers.

The next day, June 1, 1946, the long-awaited official decree arrived announcing the elevation of Bishop John to Archbishop and his appointment as ruling Archbishop of the Diocese, directly subordinate to the Synod Abroad.

The new ruling Archbishop notified Archbishop Victor of his appointment and suggested that he vacate the Cathedral residence and leave the boundaries of the Shanghai Diocese.

Archbishop Victor, in turn, handed Archbishop John a decree from the Moscow Patriarchate (No. 15 of June 10, 1946), appointing Bishop Juvenaly from Manchuria to the jurisdiction of Archbishop Victor “for replacement of the post of Bishop of Shanghai, who had gone under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate.”

On June 16, 1946, this decree was published in the Soviet press, and the next morning, during the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral, Archbishop Victor and his clergy who had gone over to the Moscow Patriarchate forcibly entered the altar and interrupted the service. They presented Archbishop John with the decree of Patriarch Alexy, in which he was declared removed from office. Archbishop John firmly refused to recognize the decree, declaring it unlawful and invalid, since the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad had not recognized the Moscow Patriarchate as free from Soviet control.

Feeling the growing threat to Archbishop John’s life, the Soviet side increased its attacks and intimidation, organizing Komsomol demonstrations and riots, which at times took on serious danger—there was even the threat of Archbishop John and other anti-communist leaders of the White Russian colony being kidnapped and taken aboard a Soviet ship. Representatives of our youth, without Bishop John’s knowledge, organized a voluntary guard that discreetly followed and protected him.

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recognized Archbishop John as the head of the Shanghai Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad.

Of all the hierarchs of the Synodal Church Abroad in China, only he—along with about 6,000 of his flock, their wives, and children, on whose behalf we, the undersigned, the last surviving members of the Executive Committee of the Russian Emigrant Association in Shanghai, bear witness—remained faithful to the Synod Abroad and to his First Hierarch.

The memory of the life and labors of our dear Bishop, Archbishop John, his fidelity and goodness, are forever preserved in our hearts as the honor of an Orthodox Hierarchy and of Russian national dignity.

Former Chairman of the Russian Emigrant Association of Shanghai

G. K. Bologov

Former members of the last Executive Committee:

P. I. Alekseenko      V. V. Krasovsky

Former members of the Audit and Supervisory Commission:

N. N. Plushakov      E. M. Krapin

Former Head of the Charitable Department of the Association:

B. L. Kuper

Former Chairman of the Russian Chamber of Commerce of Shanghai:

M. A. Moshkin

The above-signed persons were administered the oath by Protopresbyter Peter Triodin of the Holy Theotokos Convent of Lesna.

May 9, 1963

San Francisco, California



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